#### Acknowledgements

The evaluator wishes to thank Jeppelle Page and the entire team at the Liberia Media Center for their support organizing meetings with key stakeholders in Monrovia and for facilitating the day visit to Tubmansburg, Bomi County. Thanks are also due to officials of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, local government employees, representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, community radio station staff and other project beneficiaries who gave their time to be interviewed for this evaluation.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluator. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author.

## Author

This report was written by Jamie Hitchen

## Project Area

The evaluation was carried out in Monrovia, Montserrado County with a day visit to Tubmansburg, Bomi County. In total the project targeted ten counties; Bomi, Montserrado, Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Bassa and Grand Gedeh.



sustaining the projects momentum without financial support, particularly in the case of media, will be a challenge.

# I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Over a period of 24 months between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017 Liberia Media Center (LMC),

given to ensuring that the knowledge obtained by those who attended the trainings or were part of the community activities was shared and sustained beyond the project cycle either through the creation of local networks or by better linking the project to other anti-corruption initiatives. The ICT platform aimed to provide an online repository of information but technical challenges severely limited its impact.

-corruption issues has,

for the most part been realized, particularly in interactions at the county level. However better documentation of impact would have made the increases, targeted in all three project outcomes, more quantifiable. But increased engagement has not impacted on the overall anti-corruption environment at the national level which, in terms of legislation, remains broadly unchanged from the start of the project. In fact the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and General Auditing Commission (GAC) both received reduced funding in the 2018/19 budget. Signs of more transparent and accountable processes in discussions around the spending of the County Social Development Funds point to the projects impact at the county level. Sustaining this pressure for accountable and transparent government will be key, but will be difficult without the financial support of the project.

The evaluation presents a number of recommendations based on it findings. Three are outlined below:

- 1. Strengthen dialogue mechanisms between citizens and local governments. County sittings offer a platform to build a better mutual understanding and facilitate a more cooperative working relationship between citizens and elected officials on transparency and accountability issues.
- 2. Create an anti-corruption champions network, using the group function on WhatsApp, to allow individuals to share experiences, knowledge and learn from each other.
- 3.

and changes in attitude, tools to capture that information, like endlines, need to be an integral part of the project plan.

The evaluation also presents a number of lessons learned. Three are outlined below:

- 1. Community radio is key in raising community level awareness and engaging citizens in debates around corruption issues due to high levels of local listenership. This is further enhanced when programmes are conducted in local languages.
- 2. ICT platforms are likely to be more effective if in-house capacity exists to resolve technical challenges.
- 3. LACC and GAC lack political and financial independence to push the anti-corruption agenda within government. County level government structures offer the best avenue for improving fiscal transparency and accountability.

Liberians are aware of the corruption and lack of transparency in society but the challenge, which this project sought to address, is in holding elected officials to their promises of reform through increased transparency in the decision making processes, both at national and county levels. The role the media can play was exemplified in August 2018 when local reporters uncov

conducted as part of project and managed to informally speak with citizens in Monrovia during the visit.

Limiting the evaluation to just two of the ten counties meant that the evaluator had to rely on LMC staff and desk reports to understand how the project was implemented and impacted in the other eight counties. Whilst the two counties selected were chosen to be r

Over 500 SM S polls, taken throughout the country during the project, each with several hundred respondents could have been used more effectively to highlight the ways the project changed attitudes, but the evaluator found no evidence that these had been comprehensively documented or used to shape the projects development. Efforts to share these polls with government officials only resonated during the election campaign period; at other times they routinely ignored them.

The effectiveness of the project was also impacted by a failure to properly account for risk either fully enough, or in some instances, at all. The risk mitigation framework outlined in the project document did not rate any of the nine risks identified as high but issues such as attrition in the media industry were cited by several respondents as being a significant challenge to the

risks that journalists and civil society activists might be exposed to in investigating corrupt practices and individuals, as well as the challenge of effectively engaging with the state, and state structures, working to tackle corruption, should have been captured in the initial risk assessment.

## (iii) Efficiency

According to the financial utilization reports which were independently verified by a national auditor, the budget was fully accounted for, with each line spending exactly the amount estimated. A line for miscellaneous expenditure of US\$1,500 was also spent in full, in the main to account for fluctuating conversion rates between the US and Liberian dollars for elements of the project where local currency was used. However, the LMC team did note that accessing some of the more remote areas during the rainy season to deliver project activities had higher travel cost implications that initially budgeted for. In these instances, the budget for project activities was used or efforts were made to reduce travel costs to other counties. Generally, the

experience of working across the country.

The high costs of outreach activities reflected the challenge of access. Whilst it was important that LMC visited each county in order to deliver trainings and establish anti-corruption champion desks the project could have improved its efficiency had regional implementing partners, perhaps the community radio stations themselves, been empowered financially to carry out some of the community awareness programmes. An additional cost-saving measure, that could have freed up funds for expenditure elsewhere on the project, would have been to increase the use of remote mentoring. The anti-corruption champions were in monthly contact, by phone, with the LMC team and a more wider use of this approach would have improved the efficiency of the projects implementation.

Outreach and awareness raising activities faced some delays in the first year of the project. The rainy season (May to August) made roads to counties where trainings of CBOs, CSOs and community radio journalists were scheduled to take place impassable. These were rescheduled for September 2016. Project delays had knock on implications, with the small grants component

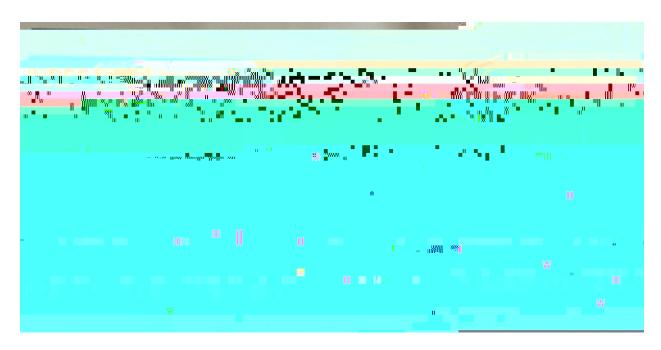
project. This delay did not have a significant impact on the outcome give the size of the grants (maximum of US\$500) meant that activities were only normally limited to one day or investigate reports that were concluded over a period of a few weeks. However, with the grants

that the money given to the beneficiaries was spent in line with their proposals through rudimentary financial reporting requirements. This would have also helped to better understand the impact the grants had in helping to achieve the projects outcomes.

Some project outputs were not completed or faced significant obstacles. The evaluator was only able to access three of the proposed four cost of corruption reports produced under output 3.4. As noted in the narrative report the online anti-corruption database, which aimed to hold details of at least 100 corruption cases faced a number of challenges. Initially the public launch of the platform had to be delayed for technical and political reasons, after the individual who was set to launch the platform became embroiled in a corruption scandal. Securing the case details proved to be a challenge, with only 32 uploaded, before a crash of the LMC server took the platform offline. During the evaluators visit to Liberia the platform remained offline, with LMC staff noting that they neither had the internal expertise or capital to contract external experts, to get it up and running again. This means that the repository of information which LMC collected was offline for a year of the project. IT training of in-house capacity, rather than the use of an external expert, would have been more effective in ensuring the functionality and sustainability of the ICT platform.

The project required continuous and frequent engagement with an array of key partners from CBOs and CSOs to community journalists and even local government officials. On the whole this was done effectively and efficiently with the trainings reaching, in all but one instance, the number of individuals targeted. Here LMC was able to draw on an extensive network of media partners to not only assist with delivering some of the trainings but in identifying the individuals who would benefit and utilize most, the knowledge gathered from the training. Efforts to engage LACC and GAC in advance and at the start of the project were commendable and important even if their involvement was difficult to sustain for political reasons outside of

It limits the ability of the evaluation to make evidence-based statements on some of its targeted impacts. Especially given the detailed baseline carried out and the percentage increases in terms of awareness it sought to achieve in the results matrix.



The project clearly had impacts in improving citizen engagement and interaction at the level of county government. The evaluator visited Bomi County where several examples were given of newly empowered journalists and radio producers using their skills to report on corruption issues and put pressure on local officials to explain expenditure and be more transparent. According to LMC staff the project recorded similar successes in other districts across the country. But the project could have done more to think about how its impact could have been documented more effectively.

enabled a more thorough assessment of their impact than simply recording the number of stories written (45) or uncovered by radio-led investigations (74). The 30 community-level awareness events did not try and ascertain how many people were reached by the activities;

potential reach of the project; monthly written reports from anti-corruption champions and

communities were successful in improving transparency in fiscal accountability case studies of why and how would have enhanced the understanding of what was replicable in other counties.

The recent uncovering of missing Liberian dollars from the Central Bank of Liberia shows the impactful role that media reporting can play in raising awareness of corruption in Liberia.

Documenting the investigations written for this project more thoroughly and ensuring that they were stored in an easy to access format, would have enabled an evaluation of their longer-term impact on the corruption environment. The cost of corruption reports was a clear effort to do this, and the fact that at least one edition was reprinted, shows that there was appetite for the information being produced. How ever, it could have resonated more by focusing more on county level corruption dynamics, not national and regional ones.

The project had lofty ambitions for its national impact. The target for outcome 3.3

government made some efforts to empower the Internal Audit Commission and an LACC amendment bill was tabled in 2016 but it subsequently faded from view. Given that the majority of the projects resources were devoted to awareness raising and enhanced knowledge among citizens and media, this expected outcome seems disconnected from the project activities. There was limited advocacy directed at policy change and even if there had been it would have been difficult to link any government reform processes on corruption to the LMC project specifically.

However, LMC, as a co-convenor of the 2017 televised presidential debate, ensured that one question for the prospective aspirants was around how they would tackle corruption if elected to office. In general, the issue was one of the most discussed during the election campaign. However, George Weah, who was elected president, did not attend the debate, though his party, did make several commitments to tackling corruption if they were to be elected to office. Now that they have been more aware citizens may be in a position to hold him to account. One respondent noted that at the county level officials seeking election became much more responsive to citizen demands and suggested that this could be exploited to secure promises on improved budget transparency and accountability, which could subsequently be used to lobby officials when in office.

Whilst citizens, as a result of the projects training and sponsored reporting, are more aware of corruption and have shown a renewed interest in advocating for greater transparency in government expenditure, there is a risk that their demands will continue to be ignored by the government; at both national and county levels. Therefore, a potentially negative impact of the project is a more aware citizenry that lacks the avenues to push for incremental change of the system. The project trained CBOs, CSOs and journalists on how to make freedom of information requests as granted in the 2010 FOI Law (with mixed success) and sought to encourage citizens However.

establishing structures to increase and encourage dialogue between elected officials and citizens on the issue of corruption would have better ensured a continued impact from the newly acquired awareness of citizens. Allowing them to apply consistent pressure on elected officials to be more transparent.

## (vi) UNDEF added value

Although the project primarily targeted improvements to the quality and transparency of governance structures in Liberia, the impact that improvements in accountable expenditure can have for the delivery of basic social services and economic opportunities is significant.

A wareness raising of the importance of increase transparency and accountability is not an area that the government appears keen on funding. In an interview with LACC officials they noted that the budget allocated for 2018/19 was barely sufficient to cover salaries, let alone outreach activities. CSOs like LMC have an important role to play in drawing attention to these issues. One that they can only play with the financial backing of international partners like UNDEF..

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) Conclusions
- 1. Phone-in programmes on community radio stations are a 7een on funding. In an in

11.

structures should be targeted as the key mechanism for improving fiscal transparency and accountability.

New spaper coverage has a much wider reach than simply the number of copies printed. Stories are often debate and discussed on community radio stations which have very wide coverage.

Improvements in transparency and accountability at the county level are not only more attainable than changes to national strategies but they can have more direct, and bigger impact, on citizens lives on a day to day basis.

A wareness that corruption is going on exists among a significant percentage of the population but the consequences it has on the delivery of basic services is less well known.

Local government officials are more receptive to listening to citizen concerns and making promises in run-up to election processes. Commitments that can then be used to hold officials accountable when in office.

## VII. ANNEXES

#### Annex 1: Example evaluation questions and detailed findings

In addition to using the broader questions for evaluation set out in the UNDEF evaluation manual further questions, specifically related to the project in ten counties of Liberia will be asked. Below are some examples that will be used. Different questions will be posed depending on who is being interviewed. This is not an exhaustive list.

#### Relevance

How did you select the counties, the training participants and crucially the anticorruption community champions for the project? What were the key considerations? How was the training manual tailored to the local dynamics? Did it deliver fresh insights and improve understandings on key issues?

What impact did the difficulties of engaging with the Anti-Corruption Commission and other key government stakeholders have on the project? What could LMC have done better to mitigate these potential risks?

Why was it important to use different media outlets to share messages (print, radio, SMS etc.)? What languages was the material produced in? And could the project have made more use of social media platforms to advance awareness? If so how?

Was the ICT component of the project needed, given the number of mediums already in use and the lack of a connected social media campaign? A comment on the low levels of internet penetration here.

Did the risk assessment framework drawn up at the start of the project accurately capture the key risks facing the project? Why was no consideration given to the personal safety risks of people who speak out ag 急躁。人類

Was the issue of corruption discussed and debated in the 2017 presidential election campaign? Were promises made around corruption? how much were they in line with the thinking of this project? And have those political commitments been translated into reality in 2018 so far?

Is there evidence to show how the knowledge which was targeted to specific counties is being spread to communities outside the initial targeted ones. If so how?

How is the role of the anti-corruption community champion seen beyond the end of the project? Are they likely to be maintained?

Any indications of national initiatives or policy developments that this awareness raising project has played a small part in contributing too? Has the new government made firm commitment to improving transparency in the execution of the 2019 budget for example?

UNDEF value added: What other complementary initiatives are being undertaken to push for greater transparency and accountability in government expenditure in Liberia? And how did this project align with those interventions?

# ANNEX 3: Persons Interviewed

	21 October 2018
Arrival, international consultant	
	22 October 2018
Victor Mayue	Project Officer, Liberia Media Center
Francis Brewer	M & E Officer, Liberia Media Center
Klonnious Blamo	Media Officer, Liberia Media Center
Thomas Tiah	Outreach Officer, Liberia Media Center
Jeppelle Page	Finance Officer, Liberia Media Center
	23 October 2018
Commissioner Charles Gibson	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission

Travel to Monrovia	
	26 October 2018
Lamii Kpargoi	The Carter Centre Liberia
Departure, international consultant	

## ANNEX 4: Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CSDF	County Social Development Funds
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GAC	General Auditing Commission
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LMC	Liberia Media Center
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund